

A century ago, many scoffed at the notion of having a team of professionals help the Senate write legislation. It was actually a New Yorker, I am proud to say, Elihu Root, who originally suggested in 1912 that, maybe, this body could use a little help in constructing well-written laws. It took a few years after he made his plea, but the complexity of tax legislation to raise revenue during World War I led to the creation of the original drafting service.

During its first 4 years, the Legislative Drafting Service handled 518 requests. By the 114th Congress, however, they were receiving more than 65,000. It is an amazing workload, unglamorous but vital and essential.

Over the past few weeks, as we have worked on the bipartisan infrastructure bill, the members of the legislative counsel have sacrificed weekends, family gatherings, and many, many hours of sleep to allow the Senate to do its work. I have seen it. We have called them up at 11 p.m. and said: You are needed to get this ready by the morning. And they don't flinch. They just roll up their sleeves and work in their professional way.

So we have always asked a lot of the legislative counsel, but they stepped up and did their job with excellence. There are a lot of members of the team who deserve recognition, beginning with the team's laudable and impressive leader on this bill, Deanna Edwards.

I also want to thank Diane Nesmeyer and her team of assistants, who have all contributed very long hours, and let me mention them. They each deserve their own acknowledgement: Heather Burnham, Mark Mazzone, Christina Kennelly, Chris Patterson, Patrick Ryan, Karson Katz, Heather Lowell, Matt McGhie, John Goetteus, Ruth Ernst, Mark McGunagle, Allison Otto, Vince Gaiani, Phil Lynch, John Henderson, James Ollen-Smith, Kim Albrecht-Taylor, Christine Miranda, Rob Silver, Evan Frank, and Molly Dunlop.

To every single person I mentioned, thank you, thank you, thank you for your incredible and indispensable work. Your skill and dedication makes it possible for this Chamber to serve the American public.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the random violence on the streets of Chicago results in Monday morning reports that break your heart: 100 people shot

on the Fourth of July weekend; the following weekend, 50; the weekend after that, 70.

It never stops. These mass shootings have become part of life in many cities across America, and it is a heart-breaking reality.

There are many ways to look at it. I have tried my best to understand it and to respond from a legislative point of view, but as we kind of play the possibilities and debate the opportunities we have to change things, the killing just goes on and on.

The city of Chicago, like many cities in the United States, is awash in guns—awash in guns. Police—I believe the statistic is—have confiscated 16,000 so far this year and still counting; thousands and thousands and thousands of guns.

In the roughest parts of Chicago, you wave a couple of \$20 bills and you have a handgun in a matter of minutes. And there really is no age check involved; and young kids, as much as older folks, buy these guns right and left, claiming they are for self-defense and many times just putting them into the machinery of crime and death that has become such a predictable part of life in that great city.

Chicagoans across every possible demographic this morning are shocked and grieving to learn that another Chicago police officer was killed in the early morning hours.

The slain officer was just 29 years old—29. She was assigned to the Community Safety Team, a special unit of officers from various districts who are pooled and sent to the meanest, most dangerous “hot spots” in the city. Her name has not been released.

She and another Chicago police officer were shot last night when they pulled over a car in the Englewood neighborhood on Chicago South Side. The second officer is hospitalized as well and fighting for his life.

Two suspects have been arrested, and a third is being sought.

Gun violence and gun deaths are daily threats in many neighborhoods, neighborhoods where it is easier to find a gun than to find a job. Sadly, it is increasingly a mortal threat to the Chicago police officers who work in these neighborhoods.

Several months ago, I had an impromptu, unreported meeting with the Chicago police force and invited anyone in who wanted to sit with a Senator and try to explain what is going on. Eight of them showed up and were pretty well representative of the Chicago police department—Black, White, Brown; male, female; Hispanic, African American; young and old—and they talked about the world they lived in and how the odds were against them on the streets of Chicago.

The bad guys just have too damn many guns, and that is a reality. They don't buy those guns in the city of Chicago, incidentally. They buy them outside of Chicago—northwest Indiana, at gun shows, with no background checks.

The gangbangers just take a 15-, 20-minute trip over the Indiana-Illinois border to a gun show and load up their truck with more guns, bring them back in, and sell them on the streets of Chicago. That is a reality.

Guns come from unlikely places. Too many guns come from States like Louisiana and Mississippi, where they have gun standards that are weaker than some other places. But they also come from downstate Illinois. I am not going to try to sugarcoat that. Those are the reports.

It troubles me, too, because when I talk to the police, they say: We need Federal help.

What they would like to be able to do is try to track these guns, try to determine their sources and cut them off. The Agency that does it is the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Agency.

We are trying now—desperately trying now to get the approval in the Senate for a person to head that Agency, and, no surprise, the ranks are closed against this person on the other side of the aisle.

Those who are listening closely to the gun lobby are trying their best to make sure ATF, this Federal Agency, doesn't have strong leadership, doesn't exercise all its authority under the law to make us safer. That doesn't make it any easier for the Chicago police, and they end up paying the price.

The latest fallen hero is the first Chicago police officer killed by gunfire in more than 2½ years. But nearly 40 Chicago police officers have been shot, or shot at, in the line of duty this year. That is part of the duty, the responsibility they face as they prowl the streets and alleys of the great city.

Chicagoans mourn for the police officer who lost her life. We are going to pray desperately for recovery of the wounded officer. Thoughts and prayers are not enough to end gun violence in Chicago and nearly every community in America. We all know that. We need better laws to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and also out of the hands of people with serious mental illness and others who shouldn't have them either.

America's families and police officers deserve our best effort to make the streets safer in Chicago and many other American cities.

#### THE ECONOMY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have been listening to criticism from the other side of the aisle about our plan to improve American families' economic security and the long-term strength in our economy.

And I have to wonder, why do Republicans never worry about deficits when they are passing trillion-dollar tax cuts that shower nearly all of the benefits on millionaires and wealthy corporations?

Why do Republicans only rediscover a concern about the debt when they are asked to support policies to help middle-class, working families, low-income

individuals—people struggling to get into the middle class?

Or when someone proposes a long-term solution to make America's economy resilient and more prosperous for everyone, they are opposed to that. That is "big spending."

Republican welfare for the rich has always been a bad investment. Forty years of trickle-down economics has given America the greatest income inequality since the Gilded Age in our history and the largest national debt in our history. Republicans' devotion to trickle-down tax cuts has given us a shrinking middle class, a hollowed-out industrial base, and crumbling infrastructure. It has made a small sliver of America lavishly wealthy and left the rest behind.

The Republican economic agenda has left the majority of Americans asking: How are we supposed to pay for childcare, our kids' college education, medical bills, or for the skilled nurses that mom and dad are going to need? Will we ever be able to retire?

Trickle-down economics doesn't have answers for those real-life questions, but our Republican colleagues keep doubling down on them.

I predict, without fear of contradiction, now that we have a Democratic President, someone on the Republican side of the aisle will come around again with a balanced budget constitutional amendment. It happens without fail. Republicans always turn to that whenever there is a Democratic President, even though the debt that President inherited was historic.

But when their trickle-down tax cuts add trillions to the national debt, are they really worried?

They never say a word about deficit and debt until they are in the minority.

Donald Trump proposed more than a trillion dollars in tax cuts, with most of the benefits going to wealthy corporations and individuals.

Did the Republicans complain about the national debt then? No.

Did they insist that such an expensive gift must have bipartisan support? No.

They passed their trickle-down tax cut through reconciliation without a single Democratic vote.

Donald Trump promised that his tax cut would be "rocket fuel for the economy."

That may be a rare Trump boast that turned out to be true, although not exactly the way he meant it. We now have a handful of billionaires who have decided to launch their own personal space programs. They are so wealthy they are racing each other into space while regular working people worry about rent, childcare, and getting on here on Earth.

The Trump tax cut gave the wealthiest Americans a fat windfall. According to Americans for Tax Fairness, the Nation's 651 billionaires saw their net worth spike by more than \$1 trillion during the first 9 months of the pandemic

while the rest of America worried about how to pay the bills with a smaller paycheck or no paycheck at all.

After Donald Trump signed his tax bill, surrounded by quite a few of my Republican colleagues in the Senate, he headed to a Christmas Eve dinner at Mar-a-Lago in Florida, and like Santa Claus, he announced to the wealthy members at his own private club at Mar-a-Lago: "You all just got richer." That was the real effect of the Trump tax cuts—the real intent.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated in 2018 that Trump tax cuts will add \$1.9 trillion to the national debt over 11 years. Where is the Republican outcry over that? The notion of \$3 trillion to help working families pay less for the essentials of life, to cut their taxes, and give them an opportunity to be in an economy creating jobs really pales in comparison to the \$1.9 trillion of tax cuts to the wealthy.

Economists at the London School of Economics analyzed the effects of trickle-down tax cuts over 50 years, 1965 to 2015. They found that trickle-down tax cuts consistently benefit the wealthy but had no meaningful effect on employment or economic growth, and they led inevitably to wider economic inequality.

The authors of the study were asked why some politicians still continue to push for these tax cuts for wealthy people. They pointed to one reason: the power of wealthy individuals and corporations to set policy agendas through their lobbying and campaign contributions.

You know what is going on, the fabulously wealthy people, who are contributing to politicians and causes that support their lifestyle, but they don't want us to know.

Is that why no Republican Senator supports President Biden's Build Back Better plan to help American families and our economy, because billionaires have more lobbyists and deeper pockets than struggling kids and families?

Two renowned economists from Princeton University—Alan Blinder, former Vice Chair of the Federal Reserve, and Mark Watson—looked at the major economic indicators of America's economy for every President back to Franklin Roosevelt.

They found by almost any major indicator—gross domestic product, employment, incomes, productivity, even stock prices—America's economy has grown significantly faster under Democratic Presidents than Republican. On jobs, since 1933, the six Presidents who presided over the fastest job growth have all been Democrats—the four Presidents with the slowest job growth, Republicans.

Donald Trump campaigned, promising to be the "greatest jobs President God ever created." There were 3 million fewer jobs when he left office than at the beginning of his term. He is the first President since Herbert Hoover to lose jobs on his watch.

The Democrats are once again cleaning up the Republican mess. With the help of the American Rescue Plan, which not a single Republican Senator or Congressman supported, America's economy has added 4 million jobs during the first 6 months of Joe Biden's Presidency. That is the fastest growth for the start of any President ever in American history.

Here is another fact from the National Bureau of Economic Research. Between 1953 and 2020, America's economy was in a recession for 23 percent of the time that the Republicans held the White House, compared to just 4 percent of the time that a Democrat sat in the Oval Office.

For the past 40 years, Republican Presidents have run up larger deficits than Democrats. Let me say that again. In the past 40 years, Republican Presidents have run up larger deficits than Democratic Presidents.

Donald Trump promised to get rid of the national debt in 8 years through trade policy. Instead, his trade policies were a costly disaster, and the national debt skyrocketed by more than \$7 trillion during his tenure.

A ProPublica-Washington Post analysis found that growth in annual deficit under Donald Trump is the third-biggest increase relative to the size of the economy of any U.S. President, with his tax cuts being the major culprit.

I could go on citing facts and figures. Democrats look at human priorities like quality childcare, medical research, renewable energy, and climate resilience, investments that grow the economy and raise wages and living standards for everyone.

We should have no apologies as Democrats for the programs that we support, particularly when it comes to climate change. That is a fact of life, sadly, in America, and we see the results reported every night on the news. Whether it is fires or extraordinary weather events, they are happening with increased frequency. It seems that Republicans ignore that reality. We cannot afford as a nation to do that any longer.

History shows that our approaches work in responding to many of these challenges. Our solutions produce stronger, more sustainable economic growth that benefits everyone. Stronger economic growth allows us to pay down our debt rather than continuing to add to it with more tax cuts for the top 1 percent.

Republicans can refuse to support our plan to Build Back Better; that is their choice. But please spare us lectures about fiscal responsibility. There is nothing responsible about repeating the same trillion-dollar mistake over and over and making small businesses and working families pay for it.

I always thought the Laffer curve, which is the inspiration to the Republicans for trickle-down economics, was the most appropriately named economic device in history—it is a "laugh-er"—and we see over and over again

why that is. Giving tax breaks to the wealthy might make for a happy Christmas at Mar-a-Lago but not for the rest of the country.

The real test is not whether we put votes on the board—and that is the bottom line in the Senate—but whether the center will hold, whether or not we have a strong enough center in the Senate dedicated to responsible investment and infrastructure and can overcome the forces outside.

Former President Trump has been making all these speeches about how bad it is to have an infrastructure program. Well, I would just like to remind the former President: He had no infrastructure program. Talked big. Delivered nothing. Now, we have a chance under President Biden to have one that is bipartisan in nature and truly will help this economy and this country over the long run.

In addition, I believe that we have to move further—and we certainly will with the budget resolution—in investing in America. The notion of having childcare—quality childcare—available and affordable to families is something that, unless you are a grandparent or a parent and know the reality, you may overlook and shouldn't. It is a critical factor in family welfare and good outcomes for children.

In addition, 2 extra years of education beyond the 12th grade, provided by our quality community colleges across America, is the ticket for better jobs and better training and better workers in the 21st century.

As we stand here, our major challenge, I suppose—our nemesis, foe—is China. Some of us can remember something called ping-pong diplomacy, which occurred roughly when I came out of college. That was opening up what we called “Red China” then to the world and giving them an opportunity to compete and to be part of the world conversation, and it happened dramatically.

I remember visiting China several times and the first time, watching them in their Mao jackets on their bicycles, taking their kids to school. What I found in later visits was a really developed economy. The Chinese have a plan. They are mercantilists first, and they are marketing around the world successfully—successfully—because they have a plan. We don't have a plan, not until this President arrived.

President Joe Biden has started this plan by saying: First, we invest in our people and make certain that their lives are easier and successful. I support him completely in that effort. I hope many will. It should be bipartisan. If we have sympathy for the wealthiest in our country, I beg my Republican friends: Have some sympathy for the middle-income families, who are struggling every day to get by.

I yield the floor.

## CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### INVESTING IN A NEW VISION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SURFACE TRANSPORTATION IN AMERICA ACT—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3684, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3684) to authorize funds for Federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, and transit programs, and for other purposes.

#### Pending:

Schumer (for Sinema) Amendment No. 2137, in the nature of a substitute.

Carper/Capito Amendment No. 2131 (to Amendment No. 2137), to strike a definition. Carper Amendment No. 2633, to change the enactment date.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Delaware.

#### IMMIGRATION

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, we just heard from the senior Senator from Illinois. I remember when he was a junior Congressman from Illinois, elected in 1982, along with about 80 other Democrats and Republicans from all over the country. One of them was me. One of them was me. And he has been a colleague off and on. I left the House to become the Governor of Delaware, and he came over to the U.S. Senate, and now, we get to work together again.

He is a smart guy, a very bright guy, and a very caring person and very good at not just working with Democrats but working across the aisle. I admired that about him in the House, and I admire that about him in the Senate.

He is passionate about a lot of things, but one of those is an important one, immigration reform. And immigration reform may seem like it is far afield from what we are talking about here today, but for the 8 years I was privileged to be the Governor of Delaware, it was a good economy—Bill Clinton was the President—and it was a good economy for the country. More jobs were created in Delaware in those 8 years than in any 8 years in Delaware's history. As Governor, I didn't create one of them, but we did see a lot of job creation and economic growth, and I was the beneficiary of that, as were other people in my State and around the country.

One of the reasons why I believe that comprehensive immigration reform is something we should have done and ought to do is not just because we are reminded on Sunday afternoon of Matthew 25—when I was a stranger in your land, you welcomed me—but also, it makes good business sense. One of the

keys to economic growth, whether it is my State or the State of New Mexico, where the Presiding Officer is from, one of the keys is the workforce, having people who are either already trained or trainable and able and willing to do the work that needs to be done.

We have a little bit of a mismatch right now in our economy with respect to the skills that a lot of folks who are without jobs would like to be having; they would like to have a job or maybe a better job. There is a mismatch in what employers are looking for and what a lot of workers bring to the workplace. A big part of what we have done in these legislative packages—I call them cares packages—in the last year or 2 is to provide money for workforce development and redevelopment to better equip people with the tools that they need.

H.R. 3684

Mr. President, the reason why I mention these things—comprehensive immigration reform, workforce training, retraining—is those are important ingredients to get our economy and to keep our economy moving. Our economy is moving in the right direction now, but we have to keep it going.

When I was privileged to be Governor of the First State, we built a highway. I took the handoff from Republican Governor Mike Castle, and we built a highway all the way from I-95, in the northern part of our State, down past Dover, past the Dover Air Force Base, all the way to our beaches. Dover has, I think, more five-star beaches than any State in America, I am told, and it is a significant part of our economy, our tourist economy. And, just as tourism is an important component, I think, in the economies of most of ours, we found that, for folks to be able to get to our beaches, they needed to have roads, highways, and bridges.

We built State Route 1—a limited highway—from one end of the State almost to the other. We took I-495, which basically circles the city of Wilmington, and essentially shut it down and resurfaced it. We resurfaced I-95 from Wilmington all the way up to the Pennsylvania line.

We did a lot of things that were designed not just to help the people of Delaware get where they needed to go, wanted to go, and move products, but also to help interstate commerce, and that is a key ingredient for those serious about growing the economy of our country. We have got to invest in our roads, highways, bridges, and in our rail.

As it turns out, I came down here today on a train, as I do many days. God willing, I will go home tonight on a train. It is an Amtrak train.

Interestingly enough, if you were to take a ton of freight and move it from, we will say, Washington, DC, to Boston, you can do it on about a gallon of diesel fuel. Think about that—a ton of freight from Washington, DC, to Boston, MA, on about a gallon of diesel fuel.